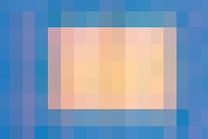
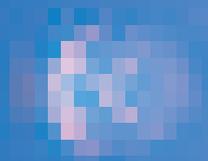


# CHANGES

BY JAMES H. HANCOCK



# Charbroiled Chure

A Documentation of Processes, Practices and  
the Recommendations of an Action-Research on  
Conservation Landownership and Livelihood  
Issues of Chure Conducted in Makwanpur,  
Bara, Rautahat, Sarlahi, Mahottari, Dhanusha,  
Siraha and Saptari Districts, Nepal.

**Community Self Reliance Centre (CSRC)**  
December, 2007

## Acknowledgment

This report is an outcome of the Participatory Action Research (PAR) in Chure area of Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusha, Mahottari, Sarlahi, Rautahat, Bara and Makwanpur districts. Therefore, this report has tried to uncover the existing situation of Chure region and share experiences and achievements of more than 200 communities of eight districts during a period of one and half year. PAR, unlike in other researches, focused on the qualitative aspects of certain issues, e.g. dealt with language more often than with numbers, and adopted reflective approach to ensure critical reflection upon the process and outcomes in each step. Moreover, this study has attempted to demonstrate and institutionalise action-reflection and action at each level, from the community to facilitators and researchers.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all the individuals and organisations that helped us with this participatory action research. First of all, we would like to thank the community people of Chure for their contribution and constructive and visionary participation in this action research. Similarly we are indebted to local facilitators, those who acted as real facilitators and researchers for the Chure conservation and livelihood of the local people.

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### Charbroiled Chure

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### **Jagat Basnet**

Executive Director  
Community Self Reliance Centre (CSRC)  
December, 2007

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>1. Chure: An Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. The Chure .....	3
1.2. Social .....	3
1.3. Economic .....	9
1.4. Natural .....	13
<b>2. Process, Objectives and Achievements of Bikalpa</b>	<b>19</b>
2.1 Inception .....	21
2.2. Major Achievements of the Program .....	22
2.3. The Working Modality .....	26
<b>3. Charbroiled Chure: Issues .....</b>	<b>43</b>
3.1. Land use .....	45
3.2. Land Ownership .....	45
3.3. Natural Resources .....	50
3.4. Livelihood .....	53
3.5. Political Economy .....	55
<b>4. Recommendations .....</b>	<b>59</b>
4.1. Establishment of a Chure Authority .....	62
4.2. Peoples' Organizations .....	68
4.3. Economic Activities .....	68
<b>References .....</b>	<b>70</b>

## ***Acronyms and Glossary***

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<b>Bhabar</b>	:	Area between terai and Chure
<b>Badal Comission</b>	:	High Level Land Reform Comission 2004 headed by the then parliamentarian Keshab Badal.
<b>Bigha</b>	:	1.68 acres
<b>Bikalpa</b>	:	An Action research program of CSRC that is the subject of this document
<b>CA</b>	:	Chure Authority
<b>CARE</b>	:	Cooperative of American Relieves Everywhere, an INGO
<b>CF</b>	:	Community Forest
<b>CFUG</b>	:	Community Forest Users Group
<b>Chure</b>	:	A short strip of area of the range of short hills extending east west beyond Nepal's boarder - intermittent valleys called Bhabar.
<b>CSIL</b>	:	Commission for the Settlement of the Issue of the Landless
<b>CSRC</b>	:	Community Self-reliance Centre, a national NGO
<b>CWMP</b>	:	Chure Watershed Management Project
<b>DDC</b>	:	District Development Committee
<b>DFO</b>	:	District Forest Office
<b>FECOFUN</b>	:	Federation of Community Forest Users Nepal
<b>HH</b>	:	Household
<b>ICIMOD</b>	:	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
<b>Kattha</b>	:	.08 acres
<b>LR</b>	:	Land Rights
<b>NAARC</b>	:	Nepal Agriculture Research Centres
<b>NCCRF</b>	:	National Chure Conservation and Rights Forum
<b>PopEd</b>	:	Popular Education - a process of action and reflection undertaken by people about their situation - creatively engaging themselves in interpreting the reality with tools such as 'but why' and 'then how', using a variety of new and culturally congruent expressions.
<b>RAD</b>	:	Rights-based Approach to Development
<b>VDC</b>	:	Village Development Committee
<b>VVS</b>	:	Village Volunteers Society
<b>WCS/WCOSN</b>	:	Women Cooperative Society, Nepal, a district-based NGO

## ***Executive Summary***

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### **The Chure in Context**

Ecologically, Nepal is divided in 5 zones: Himal, high mountains, mid-mountains, Chure and terai. Chure extends from Indus river in the west to Brhmaputra river in the east. Average hight of Chure is 1500m asl. It's width is 5 to 50 kms (RH, 2000). In Nepal, it runs east to west in 36 administrative districts mostly in the periphery covering 18,860 sqkms - some 13% of country's surface area. 14% of the total land in Chure is said to be cultivable. It's 78% percent of the surface area is reported to have covered by the forests when 43% of Nepal's total area was said to be under forest cover.

Until the beginning of 1950s Chure covered with thick forests was inaccessible area. It came under pressure when migrants from the north cleared the forests, cultivated land and settled there. Lately, number of such people in recent decades has gone sharply up.

Migrants moved to Chure seeking alternatives for their hardship in the hills. So did the people from the south. From time to time, even the migrants from Mahabharat hills who have hard time to cope with the conditions of terai have moved here. Migrants who make to Chure are generally worse-off. Infertile silty land, area not accessible by motorized transportation and absence of other physical facilities does not attract better-off at the first place.

There is no unanimous statistics of chure as natural boundary has no hard and fast delineation. Sometimes,

even a ward does not completely fall in the Chure region. Some have said some 17% of national population dwelling in terai, while others point 1.5 million i.e. under 7% of Nepal's population. The district that fall in Chure have some 65% Nepal's total population. Available statistics show a majority of janjatis live in chure. In the 6 districts where Bikalpa surveyed, population of janjatis accounted 67% followed by 17 and 16 percents of dalits and others respectively.

### **The Bikalpa: The Processes and Major Achievements**

Towards the end of 2004, a fact-finding mission of CSRC paid a field visit to the Chure area of Mahottari. It found that out of 168 households 165 households in Ratamate village of Gauribas VDC were landless. CSRC joined hands with WHS a local NGO to help provide legal support to the victims of the two VDCs. In the meantime, an agreement was made between CARE and CSRC to undertake a study of landlessness, livelihood and the conservation of Chure. Two district-based NGOs – Women Cooperative Society Nepal (WCSN) for Mahottari and Village Volunteers Society (VVS), Sarlahi and 12 and 4 VDCs north of East-West Highway respectively were selected. On the second year, it operated directly with local activists in the adjoining 6 districts: Makwanpura, Bara, Rautahat, Dhanusha, Siraha and Saptari.

Nature of the work in a nutshell was a participatory action-research to be conducted with people in support of the two NGOs. The study would have to end up with recommendations as is the case with all studies. It was named Bikalpa literally meaning the 'alternative' to reflect the new approach of conducting study with the people. It worked in Chure area for two years (November 2004 to March 2007). A number of methodologies were used in the process. This report is the documentation of this process with a view to harness support on the issues raised by the study.

Bikalpa was the first external agency to reach to many villages of Chure. It insisted that since the source of flooding and cutting of the land by the river is upstream, it is but logical to work at the source. Bikalpa brought the issues coming from the research to the wider arena. Issue of the land entitlement was the most prominent one. It has established how the issue of livelihoods in Chure is related to the issue of its conservation.

Conducting an action research with local young people by training and mobilizing them was an innovative approach. Outcome of the research was fed into an 'action-reflection' process on which popular education approach is based. It combined the social dialogue with research that brought the wealth of richness to the research and number of themes for community to reflect upon. This has significantly contributed to the development of local human resource that is able to carry the issue of land rights forward and conduct conservation and livelihood enhancing activities.

People of Bikalpa working area are better organized. Between Makwanpur and Saptari 214 Peoples' organizations have emerged. They have been federated at VDC level units in Sarlahi and Mahottari culminating into 'National Chure Conservation and Rights Forum Nepal'. This is a part of National Land Rights Forum. Some 5,000 people are directly affiliated. Preparation and mobilization of the facilitators was the essence of the approach. Research was conducted by local facilitators mobilized by through local NGOs. The facilitators in turn used the process of 'popular education' (PopEd) for awareness and organization taking survey questionnaire as an opportunity for dialogue. This document has paid more attention to capture this process.

### **Major Issues**

Issues here are presented in 4 categories: a) concerning land where absence of land use planning and relationship with conservation with land entitlement, land size and landlessness are discussed, b) categories concerning natural resources critically relate many facets of pressure on natural resources emitting from poverty, c) livelihood concerns raise food security, labour exploitation and indebttness as the major issues to be tackled ending up finally on, and d) political economic issues that digs out the reasons for a low voice of Chure people in the districts.

### **Recommendations**

Recommendations made here are the outcomes of the action research that is dealt in the second chapter in detail. These recommendations have two conceptual frameworks for implementation: a) that approach to addressing the issues of conservation - a watershed should be a unit of work - not the political unit where even the two neighbors are in different wards, VDCs or districts and b) rights-based approach be adopted in addressing the issues of land and livelihood.

Although Chure encompasses some 13% the total land of the country, it has not been able to draw the proportional attention it deserves. Because, it is scattered in so many districts and people living there have low voice and are always in minority, the belt suffers negligence and over exploitation of resources. It needs an identity and advocacy to speak for Chure if the process of degradation is to be reversed. **Formation of an all powerful Chure Authority to manage the area is recommended. This will prevent being Chure area left as insensitive antenna of a terai district or as a pig's tail of hills district.** More discussion and exercises are necessary for making it to be a functional body and demarcate it. It may well fit into forthcoming federal restructuring of the state. Major tasks of the authority are conceptualized below.

**Major task of the Chure Authority is envisioned to entitle the land to its tillers.** Other tasks include land use planning and implementation precondition of which is considered to be the land entitlement. It also recommends shifting agriculture practice from annual to perennial. Recommending handing over of the forests to community it stresses the recycling of the revenue to the locals generated by licensing the collection of sand, stones and gravel.

It strongly recommends the mobilization of people to safeguard Chure. A vibrant organization of Chure people (even after the establishment of Chure Authority) is essential. Such an organization has to spend its energy in both claiming the due rights and expanding economic opportunities. Organization is a key strength of people who are in minority, cultivate in infertile land and are subject to exploitation.

It also recommends a mechanism to be devised in such a way that people living in Chure do conserve the resources and they are paid back for their efforts of conserving resources. Cost of devastation in Chure will have detrimental affect in agriculture and other livelihood conditions of the people. It is well established that a high raising river is not due to a high quantity of water but due to the soil and gravel it carries along.

It is recommended to create employment opportunities in horticulture and vegetable production, animal husbandry and the processing of NTFPs. People should be provided soft loan with training both for production and meeting the shortage for consumption. Consumption

should also include loan for higher education. Education is the most potential investment in the future of Chure people. This is one of the second shortest route after land entitlement to take Chure people out of poverty - forever.

Its proximity to hot terai can give an escape to cool heights from recreation point of view. It can give a two-way view: mountains in the north and the plain in the south. It can also tempt to detour drivers to spend a cool night on a long haul. Farm houses and family homes can attract rich plains' people to spend a weekend over! And this market is not confined to Nepal's borders – it can be what Massoorie to Delhi and Deharadoun to the people of Bihar and UP states of India.





# 1.

## *Chure: An Introduction*

1.1. THE CHURE .....	3
1.2. SOCIAL .....	3
1.2.1. Mixed Migrant Population .....	3
1.2.2. Unsettled Scattered Isolated Settlements .....	7
1.2.3. Gain and Pain .....	8
1.3. ECONOMIC .....	9
1.3.1. Little and Infertile Land .....	9
1.3.2. Labour Exodus .....	10
1.3.3. Mine of Sand and Gravel .....	11
1.3.4. Market in the Front Yard .....	12
1.3.5. Supplier of Forest Products .....	12
1.3.6. Exploited and the Exploiters: Chure Bhabar Relations ..	13

1.4. NATURAL	13
1.4.1. Area of Chure	14
1.4.2. Landscape	16
1.4.3. Geology	16
1.4.4. Soil	17
1.4.5. Vegetation	18
1.4.6. Environmental Services to Terai	18

## 1.1. THE CHURE

Chure also known as *Simalik* is a strip of hill-range running east to west between terai and Mahabharat hills. When there is flat space between Mahabharat hills and Chure range, larger ones are called Doon and smaller ones Bhabar. Administratively, most of Chure range falls in the peripheral frontiers of the hill-districts in the north and the fertile populated plane districts of Terai. This means that voice from the area is low, so are the resources reaching to Chure. The nature shouldn't have bothered with such boundaries but is governed by the law of resource use. Such areas are assaulted by humans and nature's resilience is low. When humans and nature cannot help each other, both become helpless. This anthology seeks to testify how the stress caused by our social structure has negative impact both on nature and humans at large.

While Chure is different from both ecological zones, i.e. Terai and Mahabharat hills, it also shares some similarities. Natural and social features of Chure are presented below:

## 1.2. SOCIAL

Until the beginning of 1950s, Chure covered with thick forests was inaccessible area. It came under pressure when migrants from the north cleared the forests, cultivated land and settled there. Lately, number of such people in recent decades has gone sharply up .

Migrants moved to Chure seeking alternatives for their hardship in the hills. So did the people from the south. From time to time, even the migrants from Mahabharat hills who have hard time to cope with the conditions of Terai have moved here.

### 1.2.1. Mixed Migrant Population

There is no unanimous statistics of Chure as natural boundary has no hard and fast delineation. Sometimes, even a ward is not completely falls in Chure region. Some have said some 17% of national population dwelling in Terai, while others point 1.5 million i.e. under 7% of Nepal's population (Chure Strategy, 2006). The district that fall in Chure have some 65% Nepal's total population.

Available statistics show a majority of Janjatis in Chure. In the 6 districts



where Bikalpa surveyed, population of Janjatis account 67% followed by 17 and 16 percents of dalits and others respectively:

Average family size is found to be 5.69 persons (this is slightly more than 5.44 national average) in the survey conducted in 99 village clusters of 22 VDCs in the said 6 districts. There were 103 men for 97 women. Male female ratio aligns with national data except in the case of janjatis who have more women per men - nearly 1:1. Under a percent of the families were single-headed. Table 1 A and B give the details of the population.

**Table 1 A: Demographic Details by District**

District	HH	Female	%	Male	%	Total	Avg member/HH
Makawanpur	336	1015	48	1120	52	2135	6.35
Sirah	704	1998	50	2082	52	3966	5.63
Dhanusa	270	704	50	717	51	1407	5.21
Bara	713	1996	50	2014	50	3999	5.61
Rautahat	308	948	50	944	50	1892	6.14
Saptari	497	1367	51	1359	50	2695	5.42
Total	2828	8028	50	8236	51	16094	5.69

Source: *Bikalpa Survey, 2006*

**Table 1 B : Demographic Details by Ethnicity**

Details	HH	Female	%	Male	%	Total	Avg member/HH
Janajati	1898	5467	49	5702	52	11064	5.83
Others	446	1243	51	1241	50	2461	5.52
Dalit	484	1318	51	1293	50	2569	5.31
Total	2828	8028	50	8236	51	16094	5.69

Source: *Bikalpa Survey, 2006*

If compared with the districts of other regions in Nepal, a high population increment is seen in Chure area between 1991 to 2001. While growth rate was 2 in Mustang district and 2.3 all over Nepal, Chure area saw some 3.4 percent growth rate. Sarlahi district shows 29 and Mahottari district shows similar trend. Table 2 shows the details.

Most residents of Chure are migrants. They have come from 30 districts in the Bikalpa survey (2007) area. 7 percent claimed to have lived their forever. Amongst migrants, source of their turnover is presented in Table 3 in the next page.

This exodus appears to have continued even after 2005 as is seen in table 3. Given this trend, one can imagine that there was almost no settlement before the 50s. A sharp rise is seen after the 60s. Eradication of malaria, increasing access to road and resettlement plans in Terai by the governments may be responsible for this stream of new comers. In

**Table 2 : Population Growth between 1991 to 2001**

District	Increment
Nepal	2.3
Mustang	2
Parbat	1
Terathum	1
Sindhupalchok	1.7
Rasuwa	1.9
Dhading	2.1
Dolakha	2.5
Sarlahi	2.9
** Chure and Bhabar of Sarlahi	3.4
Mahottari	2.6
* Chure and Bhabar of of Mahottari	4
** Karmaiya, Kalinjo, Narayankhola, Nnetrajung, Attrauli, dhungrekhola, Hariwan, parwanipur, Patthatkot, Rnigunj, sasapur, Labandi VDCs	
* Bardibas, gauribas, Maisthan, Khaiyarmara VDC	

Source: *CBS 1991 and 2001*

**Table 3: Origin of Migrants in Chure parts of Makawanpur, Bara and Saptari Districts**

Distracts of Origin	Makawanpur		Bara		Saptari	
	HH	%	HH	%	HH	%
Bhojpur	0	0	1	0.14	0	0
Rasuwa	0	0	1	0.14	0	0
Illam	0	0	1	0.14	0	0
Kathmandu	0	0	1	0.14	0	0
Mahottari	0	0	1	0.14	0	0
Okhaldhunga	0	0	3	0.42	1	0.2
Dolakha	0	0	3	0.42	0	0
Udayapur	0	0	4	0.56	61	12.3
Sindhupalchok	2	0.6	6	0.84	0	0
Sarlahi	0	0	7	0.98	0	0
Parsa	0	0	8	1.12	0	0
Chitawan	0	0	9	1.26	0	0
Sindhuli	12	3.57	12	1.68	5	1
Lalitpur	1	0.3	13	1.82	1	0.2
Rautahat	0	0	13	1.82	0	0
Dhading	6	1.79	18	2.52	0	0
Nuwakot	0	0	19	2.66	0	0
Ramechhap	0	0	22	3.09	4	0.8
Kavre	42	12.5	66	9.26	0	0
Bara	1	0.3	95	13.3	0	0
Makwanpur	271	80.65	410	57.5	0	0
Morang	0	0	0	0	1	0.2
Sankhuwasawa	0	0	0	0	3	0.6
Sunsari	0	0	0	0	6	1.2
Nuwakot	0	0	0	0	9	1.8
Khotang	0	0	0	0	19	3.8
Siraha	0	0	0	0	98	19.7
Saptari	0	0	0	0	289	58.1
Baglung	1	0.3	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>713</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>713</b>	<b>99.97</b>

Source: *Bikalpa Survey, 2006*

a Bikalpa survey of 2006 in Sarlahi and Mahottari districts, reasons for migration were stated as landslides and food shortage mostly augmented with loan in the place of their origin. Still, people migrate seasonally for wage labour. All family members migrate in some households leaving the locked up houses behind.

There is a significant within-Chure migration Makwanpur district scoring highest (81%) followed by Saptari and Siraha districts at 58 and 41 percents respectively. Rautahat district received 6% of in-migrants.

### 1.2.2. Unsettled Scattered Isolated Settlements

Villages are not yet well-settled. There are no permanent trails from one house to the other. There is no network of established trail as found in the mid-hills or the terai. Tracing even the main trail after monsoon is difficult. No *pati-pauwa*, nor *chautara*<sup>1</sup> with or without trees can be found. Community didn't have priority to build community infrastructure as in the old days as it takes time for a migrated community to organize for collective work. Perhaps values are changing too. In absence of traditional feudal leadership, no acceptable, philanthropic leaders have emerged. Government or external aid led 'bikas' has yet to reach to these villages. Settlements appear stuck out haphazardly without adequate thinking about mutual cooperation and collective management of public affairs or resources.

Settlements are also scattered - population density is low. Table 8 compares the population density with some other parts of Nepal. Contrast is that population density of the same district between Chure area and the plain. For example, density of population in Narayankhola and Parawanipur VDCs in Sarlahi district is just over 90 persons/sqkm while Jabdi and Tribhunagar VDCs in the plains have nearly 950 and 1300 persons/sqkm respectively. In general, Bhabar, however, has higher density than in the Mahabharat hills.

Obviously it's not a planned or time-tested settlement. Infertile land is the main reason for getting scattered. The need to guard the crops from wild animals also has led the settlements to disperse. House must be near the fields. Clearly, such a scattered nature of settlement put

<sup>1</sup> *pati-pauwa* = in the older days people constructed 'free-houses' for the travellers for shelter to spend a night often with religious drives; *chautara* = raised stone platforms often under the holy couple of banyan and pipal trees for shelter for short stoppage.



them in a disadvantageous position for providing services such as school, health centre or drinking water or electricity. It's always more efficient to invest in densely populated areas as per unit cost is low.

Settlements are also isolated from outside. Neither information neither goes in nor does much come out. The state neither can take control on the affairs of people nor does it deliver services. Reality of the area rarely comes out. Clear felling of forests for agriculture continues. It's free for the teachers or health post staff not to attend the job for weeks. Isolation supports exploitation of locals by unfair local including extra-legal activities such as smuggling of timber. It's rare that a journalist or human rightists, or an environment campaign or a member of civil society makes up to this place. It's not so scenic in comparison to many scenic places of Nepal. Other than the hardship of life everything else is taken easily: no delivery, no demand of services.

### 1.2.3. Gain and Pain

Migrants who make to Chure are generally worse-off. Infertile silty land, area not accessible by motorized transportation and absence of other physical facilities does not attract better-off at the first place. Because, they are similar, giving importance to mutual learning is minimal. Unlike in most places where migrants are quick adapters, it's not the case with Chure migrants. Their voice is also low.

All are similar. No one is there to employ them. Even if local employment exists, it pays back very low. For external wages, distance is too far. If they live in the towns, they end up spending most money they earn. They cannot do back and forth in a single day. They, thus, cannot take advantage of urban areas not too far from them. No cash is generated in the village. This forces them to move to Bhabar even to borrow money. This aspect will be dealt in greater detail later.

Unlike, poors from other regions, they can resort to forest products at the time of food shortage. There are always some roots or shoots to eat. They may not have entitlement, they are not landless. There is no worry for land for a house to live. There is no shortage of firewood. If a town is nearby one may even sell firewood for money! Poors in the plains spend a whole day to collect firewood - in fact, they get to the foothills of Chure for it or fight for dry leaves for cooking.

## 1.3. ECONOMIC

### 1.3.1. Little and Infertile Land

Until recently, there was land available to anybody who was prepared to clear fell the forests and settle. Although not fertile, not enough to feed the family, people have some land to till except of those who were hit by the land slides. Unlike landless poor in the Terai, there are landed



poor. And if compared with terai poor, perhaps, there is less oppression and exploitation.

According to Bikalpa survey (2007), there are 8% landless people in Chure area. This can be considered much less if it is compared with 29% landless people in Nepal. In the district where Bikalpa worked average landlessness is 27% (Census, 2001). However, average size of the land is small: 9 katthas or .75 acre/household. It is less than the national average of 24 katha/household. Out of 2,800 household covered by the survey, 7% possess land more than 40% katha. There were only two households who have 5 bigha of land. 40% have a mere 1-5 katha of land.

Land is dry and steep. Soil is comprised of loose gravel. Only two crops can be cultivated a year. Most chure dwellers share crop land in terai. Despite them cultivating land for long time, they couldn't claim tenancy rights i.e. share in land entitlement. Now the tenancy rights of those who have already not been registered as tenants by the time of the enactment of the law have been abolished by the law. Some of them have lost their land for not being able to pay the mortgage. Poor people have this as the only resort to secure cash but often fail to pay back and end up losing the land. Farmers may also lose land for being cheated by landlords and but create some more by clear-felling again.

### 1.3.2. Labour Exodus

Apparently, not enough food is produced in the area. Nor there are ways for generating needed cash in the villages. There are a number of



young people who migrate out for earning wage labour. They make to major populated cities for unskilled labour. They are found engaged in informal economic sectors such as brick laying, carpet weaving where exploitation is reportedly high and respect to rights of workers are minimal. They work as agriculturer labourers in peak seasons such as planting and harvesting in the nearby plains. Many go to India and few have also made to the Gulf. Out migrants doesn't exclude children who mostly occupy domestic jobs both in Nepal and India.

### 1.3.3. Mine of Sand and Gravel

Chure is the mine of sand and gravel that can meet the construction demand of the whole nation or even beyond. There are sand and gravel based industries close by the road along many streams and rivers. This



resource attracts a transaction of billions of rupees every year. Many people come down to collect sand and stone for wages. This material gets out of Nepalese boarder to India. This is a source of handsome income for DDCs as issuing permission to collect these resources is under their jurisdiction. However, increasing mechanization of crushing and collecting is jeopardizing employment opportunities of cheurey people. Price of labour has gone down. A long chain of middlemen also creates an environment of exploitation. Currently, they are reported to earn Rs 50/day but not paid instantly.

### 1.3.4. Market in the Front Yard

Although Chure is isolated and remote by some standards, a highly populated terai settlement is a huge market. It has different climatic conditions than that of terai and there is a good opportunity to do terai-targeted production. Chure doesn't have to suffer of the distance as done by remote high mountain areas. Vegetable is one of the most potential products as vegetable is imported from India when the plains are too rainy for vegetable production. When tomatoes cost Rs 5/kg in the season, it costs as much as Rs 40/kg in the off-season.



### 1.3.5. Supplier of Forest Products

Chure is the source of forest products timber, firewood and even fodder for the populous Terai. Until there were settlement in the Chure area,



people from Terai used to go to the foothills of Chure with oxen-driven carts to fetch forest products. There is a high price of wood for construction in the plains. This makes trade on wood lucrative for many people to smuggle and sell. Although high profits are made by often the illicit traders, poor get employment for chopping down and transportation of wood. Its common for poor people to sell poles (whole tree of manageable size that they don't have to saw but to chop down, brush the branches off, put it on the shoulder and off too sell! This vocation is preferred by the poor because they can exchange such forest products right into cash. This is not the case in the Mahabharat hills.

### 1.3.6. Exploited and the Exploiters: Chure Bhabar Relations

Chure and Bhawar people have intense socio-economic relations. Labour and natural resources of Chure are used by Bhabar people, while Chure people depend on Bhabar's capital and grain. Chure people also have to depend on Bhabar people for information and administrative matters. And this relation is not based on equal footage. Normally, Chure people loose out to Bhabar people. Although Chure people still have relations

Location	in the Mahabharat hills, its not based on economy, they are just social relationships. The Churia region lies in between the Tarai (in south) and middle mountains (in north) This issue has been dealt at greater detail under issues in the third chapter.
Area	It occupies about 1.35 million ha
Geology	It consists of tertiary sandstone, siltstone, shale and conglomerates
Distribution	Chure is a narrow strip hills that run east to west between the Terai in the south and the Mahabharat hills in the east. In the north, it possesses features of both ecological zones. Following table gives a comparative birds' eyes view of natural and geographical features.
Elevation	500 m to 2,100 m amsl (at places less than 200 m in narrow river valleys)

**Table 4: Natural Features of Chure**

Distribution	the Churia hills are higher and broader in the west than in the east
Elevation	500 m to 2,100 m amsl (at places less than 200 m in narrow river valleys)
Climate	Sub-tropical (but warm temperate in higher hill spurs)
Moisture regime	Sub-humid in most of the area, humid in south aspect of western, central, eastern development region and dun valleys
Rainfall intensity	High
Vegetation	Sal, mixed hardwoods and pine forest
Soils	Ustochrepts, Haplustolls, Rhodustalfs, Ustorthents, Dystrochrepts, Haplaquepts and Ustifluvents
Crops	Rice, maize, wheat, millet, radish, potato, ginger, tea, etc
Crops/year	2-3 crops/year with irrigation (1-2 crops without irrigation)
Streams	Streams originating from the Churia hills either flow to north or south over thick fans and flood plains in braided pattern
Dun valley	At some places, the Churia range is divided into two ranges with dun valley between them

Source: *National Strategy for Chure Area Program, 2006*

#### 1.4.1. Area of Chure

Nepal is divided in 5 ecological zones: Himal, high mountains, mid-mountains, Chure and terai (Hagen, 1998, LRMP, 1986). It extends from Indus river in the west to Brahmaputra river in the east. Average height of Chure is 1,500m above sl. Its width is 5 to 50 kms (RH, 2000). In Nepal, it runs east to west in 36 administrative districts (for details see Table 5 and 6) covering 18,860 sqkms - some 13% of country's surface area. 14% of the total land in Chure is said to be cultivable. It's 78% percent of the surface area is reported to have covered by the forests when 43% of Nepal's total area was said to be under forest cover. Table 5 shows a comparative perspective of other regions with Chure.

**Table 5: Comparative Major Landuse Pattern of Nepal's Geographic Regions**

Geographical area	Total area		Cultivated land		Uncultivated land		Pasture land		Forest area		Others	
	Ha.	%	Ha.	%	Ha.	%	Ha.	%	Ha.	%	Ha.	%
Himal	3,349	23	8	0	2	0	884	26	222	7	2,234	67
High mountain	2,959	20	245	8	147	5	510	17	1,813	61	245	8
Mid-mountain	4444	30	1,222	28	666	15	293	7	2,202	50	61	1
Churia area	1,886	13	259	14	55	3	21	1	1,477	78	74	4
Terai	2,110	14	1,234	58	118	6	50	2	593	28	116	5
Tarai	14748	100	2,968	20	987	7	1,758	12	6,307	43	2,730	19

Source: *ISRSC, 2004, District Development Profile of Nepal*

**Table 6: Districts Falling in Chure Range**

Development Regions	Districts	No of Districts
Eastern	Ilam, Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, Dhankuta, Phojpur, Udayapur, Saptari, Siraha	9
Middle	Dhanusha, Mahottari, Sarlahi, Sindhuli, Kavre, Lalitpur, Makwanpur, Rautahat, Bara, Parsa, Chitwan	11
Western	Tanahun, Palpa, Nawalparasi, Rupandehi, Kapilvastu, Arghakhanchi	6
Mid-western	Pyuthan, Salyan, Dang, Banke, Bardia	5
Far-western	Surkhet, Doti, Kailali, Dadeldhura, Kanchanpur	5

Source: *Chure Strategy 2002*

More than 30% of the land falls in Chure region of the following districts: Arghakhanchi, Parsa, Kailali, Banke, Dolakha, Surkhet, Makwanpur, Nawalparasi, Udayapur, Dang, and Chitwan. 10 districts encompass 10-30% land in Chure while 7 districts have 1 to 10 percent of Chure inside their boundaries. The following table shows the details of district wise coverage of Chure.

### 1.4.2. Landscape

Unlike Mahabharat hills, terrain of Chure is rough and the mountains rise steeply high. 67% of the land is more than 20 degrees. 8% of the houses were found to have constructed in Makwanpur and Chitwan district Chure areas (See the table 8 for details) on such slope.

**Table 8 : Details of Chure Landscape**Source: LRMP (Kenting Earth Sciences), 1986

Landforms	Dun Valley		Chure		Chure region	
	Area (sq. km)	%	Area (sq. km)	%	Area (sq. km)	%
River bed			651	3.6	651	3.5
Gently sloping land (< 5°)	489	85.5	3541	19.4	4030	21.4
Dissected land (0-20°)	83	14.5	533	2.9	616	3.3
Moderately sloping (< 20°)			888	4.9	888	4.7
Steeply sloping (> 20°)			12605	69.2	12605	67.1
Total	572	100.0	18218	100.0	18790	100.0

Source: LRMP (Kenting Earth Sciences), 1986



### 1.4.3. Geology

Chure was formed 100 million years ago while the Mahabharat was already formed before 80 million years. It was formed of gravel and silt from the high mountains washed by mighty rivers. It is fragile in comparison to the Mahabharat range. Based on its structure, it can be

divided into three types: upper Chure that is comprised of large round stones, gravel, sandy stones, and yellow clay, middle Chure that is comprised of Sandstones and gravel and lower Chure that is made up of sand, sandstones, the lime. It has steep gorges between the mountains forming exposed and moist slopes.



### 1.4.4. Soil

Soil in Chure is mostly loose and sandy. Due to its young age of the mountains and steep slopes, a lot of soil is washed down every year. Depending on its landuse intensity, per year, 780 to 20,000 ton of soil per square kilometer is washed down (Mishra ad Bista, 1998). An ICIMOD study in Bandipur, Tanahun district found 3.4 ton of soil was washed down every year from hectare.

Rivers originating in Chure carry much high volume of silt than those originating in high mountains.



### 1.4.5. Vegetation

76% percent of Chure is said to be covered by the forests as already mentioned earlier. Mixed hardwood including sal (*Shorea robusta*) to pines (*Pinus roxburghii*) to *Quercus* species of trees are found in the short span of Chure. Vegetation wise, chure is truly a hinterland between terai and the Mahabharata. 82 medicinal and 76 edible forest plants are recorded in Chure. (Bhuj, 2000). Riverbanks are often occupied by khair and sisoo.

### 1.4.6. Environmental Services to Terai

Relatively Chure has higher forest coverage than other areas. It can play significant role in maintaining ecological balance. It has been providing timber, firewood, fodder and the leaf-litter. Perhaps the most important of all is the recharging of water to maintain water table in terai. It reduces run-off and discharges water for a long time. It also provides manure downstream in the fields. In fact, it also recharges manure in the plains. It also provides construction material such as stones and sand.

Of course, every thing is dependent on another. However, deterioration of Chure will have negative impact in terai. This means that deterioration of Chure affects 65% of the population and 30% of the land.



# 2.

## ***Process, Objectives and Achievements of Bikalpa***

2.1 INCEPTION .....	21
2.2. MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PROGRAM .....	22
2.2.1. Issues Surfaced From the Core .....	22
2.2.2. Better Organization and Increased Awareness .....	23
2.2.3. Establishment of Alternative Work Approach .....	24
2.2.4. Generating Support for Chure .....	25
2.3. THE WORKING MODALITY .....	26
2.3.1. Approaches to Equip Facilitators .....	27
2.3.1.1. Simultaneous Study and Work .....	27
2.3.1.2. Use of Inclusive and Empowering Methods ...	28
2.3.1.3. Applied Training .....	29
2.3.1.4. Fun and Dynamism .....	30
2.3.1.5. Macro and Micro Linkages .....	31

- 2.3.2. The Process of Building Dynamic Facilitators ..... 32
  - 2.3.2.1. Selection Process ..... 32
  - 2.3.2.2. Ways of Equipping the Facilitators ..... 34
- 2.3.3. Tools and Techniques Used ..... 39
  - 2.3.3.1. Household Survey ..... 39
  - 2.3.3.2. Socetaal Analysis ..... 40
  - 2.3.3.3. Writing Case Studies ..... 40
  - 2.3.3.4. Encampment ..... 40
  - 2.3.3.5. Cultural Campaigns ..... 41
  - 2.3.3.6. Bicycle Rally and Pedal Walks ..... 41
  - 2.3.3.7. Discussion Circles ..... 42
  - 2.3.3.8. Graffiti ..... 42

## 2.1 INCEPTION

CSRC met WCS who was working in Chure area of Mahottari. WCS mentioned that Land Rights was a burning issue in Mahottari district. CSRC was already taking the issue of land rights at national scale. It was natural that it was the central theme of transaction amongst individuals or institutions whoever met CSRC. This was the beginning of a series of interaction with WCS. CARE who was venturing into rights-based approach to development was operating a Chure Watershed Management Project (CWMP) in Sarlahi and Mahottari districts. WCS took the responsibility of identifying areas of deprivation of peoples' rights. Deprivation of rights on land was ranked as the most important issue.

Towards the end of 2004, a fact-finding mission of CSRC paid a field visit to the Chure area of Mahottari district. It found that out of 168 households 165 households in Ratamate village of Gauribas VDC were landless. The mission reported:

*“...These households have been living here for 40 years. They have no entitlement to the land they are living on. Although the government had provided basic services such as drinking water, electricity and schooling, officially they were illegitimate residents. In 1996, the Commission for the Settlement of the Issue of the Landless had delineated and distributed the land to the landless with a view to entitle them with the land. However, the commission never managed to get to Gauribas. Although the Land Survey Act 1962 , has a provision of entitling the land who tills the land for 15 years, the government has not taken initiative in this direction. ....”*

WHS helped people to file the case for entitlement to the Supreme Court. Joint work between CSRC and WHS joined to help provide legal support to the victims of the two VDCs. In the meantime, an agreement was made to undertake a study of landlessness, livelihood and the conservation of Chure between CARE and CSRC. Two district-

based NGOs - WHS for Mahottari and Village Volunteers Society (VVS), Sarlahi and 12 and 4 VDCs north of East-West Highway respectively were selected. On the second year, it operated directly with local activists in the adjoining 6 districts: Makwanpura, Bara, Rautahat, Dhanusha, Siraha and Saptari districts.

Nature of the work in a nutshell was a participatory action-research to be conducted with people in support of the two NGOs. The study would have to end up with recommendations as is the case with all studies. It was named Bikalpa to reflect the new approach of conducting study through and with people it was named Bikalpa - literally meaning the 'alternative'. It worked in Chure area for two years (November 2004 to March 2007). A number of methodologies were in the process. There was a good body of information on Chure and some actions were taken along the way. This report is the documentation of this process with a view to harness support on the issues raised by the study.

## 2.2. MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PROGRAM

This program has brought out the pertinent issues of Chure on the surface while establishing relationship between the land rights, conservation and overall wellbeing of its residents. Local leadership has been developed who can take this issue forward by themselves. The following text gives an account of the achievements made by the program.

### 2.2.1. Issues Surfaced From the Core

Still the presence of government and non-government institutions in Chure is minimal. With a conviction that in order to spread the word of awareness on the conservation or to enhance the livelihood condition, one must work with the people, Bikalpa reached to the interiors of Chure. It insisted that since the source of flooding and cutting of the land by the river is upstream, it is but logical to work at the source. It also advocated for an integrated approach for the improvement of the livelihood and conservation of resources. Bikalpa was the first external agency to reach to many villages of Chure.

Bikalpa brought the issues coming from the research to the wider arena. Issue of the land entitlement was the most prominent one. It has



established how the issue of livelihoods in Chure is related to the issue of its conservation. It has raised this issue at different levels pointing the need of addressing the both simultaneously. It is vocal that blaming Chure dwellers for the depletion of the environment is not fair. The state with all its machinery at different intensity at different levels, the market are as responsible as the Chure settlers. It brought the issue of low or lack of access to proportional basic facilities of Chure people to the media.

### 2.2.2. Better Organization and Increased Awareness

People of Bikalpa working area are better organized. Between Makwanpur and Saptari 214 peoples' organizations have emerged. They have been federated at VDC level units in Sarlahi and Mahottari districts culminating into 'National Chure Conservation and Rights Forum Nepal'. This is a part of National Land Rights Forum. Some 5,000 people are directly affiliated. A score of people do get involved in mass meetings, on foot and cycle rallies, festivals. This process has brought about significant awareness on conservation and livelihood issues of Chure and the need for getting organized. Participation of people in thousands in these gathering is the testimony of their engagement.

**Table 9: No of Organizations**

District	No of VDCs	No of Organizations	No of Members of Organizations						Total
			Dalit		Janajati		Other		
			Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Saptari	7	19	198	164	51	31	8	7	459
Siraha	4	20	22	18	53	239	13	18	363
Dhanusa	2	9	15	7	72	91	65	58	308
Rautahat	6	18	53	63	114	265	19	22	536
Makawanpur	5	30	6	24	197	415	10	38	690
Bara	6	36	66	75	155	399	50	150	895
Mahottari	4	34	118	97	166	258	145	136	920
Sarlahi	8	57	50	73	487	761	24	68	1463
Total	42	223	528	521	1295	2459	334	497	5634

Many peoples' organizations have been active in conservation of Chure and advocating for the rights. Communities have been initiating self-help actions without external assistance. Planning at local level is becoming customary. They have been regulating grazing, controlling forest fires and smuggling of timber and planting trees by collecting saplings from the forests. They have also been approaching and demanding facilities with the service providers especially DDCs and VDCs.

### 2.2.3. Establishment of Alternative Work Approach

Conducting the action research with local young people by training and mobilizing them was an innovative approach. Outcome of the research was fed into an 'action-reflection' process on which popular education approach is based. People were involved in the research as a part of the process for analyzing the situation they are in. It presented an example how community was engaged in action and reflection. It also presented a model on how to capacitate local people and conduct research relevant to the community. It combined the social dialogue with research that brought the wealth of richness to the research and number of themes for community to reflect upon.

This has significantly contributed to the development of local human resource that is able to carry the issue of land rights forward and conduct



conservation and livelihood enhancing activities. Leadership that can identify the issues of the community with the community and organize it to claim rights is developed. They are critical to social structure, sensitive to the environment, conscious to the rights of people. It is certain that this human resource will be used one way another in the area in the days to come. Most of them will take the leadership of the change process in the community.

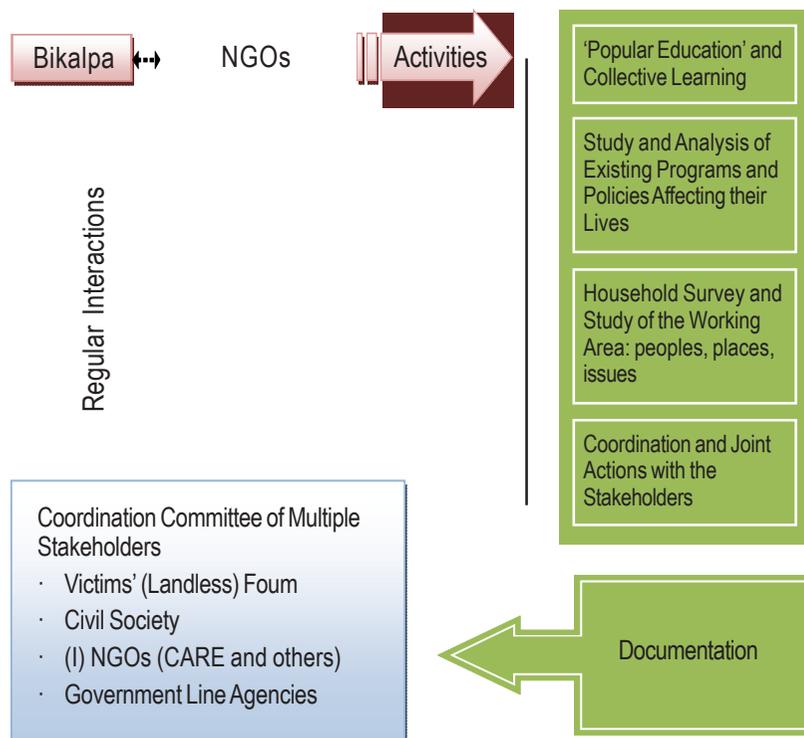
### 2.2.4. Generating Support for Chure Conservation

In all the programs conducted at local levels, representatives of the political parties have been invited where they have expressed solidarity for the cause of Chure people. Politicians are made aware of the issues of Chure and were requested to report it 'above'. Opportunities were also created for dialogue with central leaders of the political parties, parliamentarians, planners, high ranking bureaucrats to avail them of the issues of Chure. Now, issues of land entitlement and conservation of Chure is a regular feature of relevant policy documents.

## 2.3. THE WORKING MODALITY

Preparation and mobilization of the facilitators was the essence of the approach. Research was conducted by local facilitators mobilized by through local NGOs. The facilitators in turn used the process of ‘popular education’ (PopEd) for awareness and organization taking survey questionnaire as an opportunity for dialogue. The outcome of the research was fed into those discussions keeping documentation as an important part of facilitators’ job. The process of organization and self-help initiatives were run simultaneously. Following diagram summarizes the modality of the work:

**Diagram I: Working Modality**



### 2.3.1. Approaches to Equip Facilitators

#### 2.3.1.1. Simultaneous Study and Work

Rather than taking someone ‘ready-made’ from outside, the activities were carried out by training local youth - men and women through training, discussions, study tours as already said. There were two aspects of their work: action and research were carried out simultaneously. After all, the study was not for outsiders but for the conservation of Chure and for securing the livelihood and the land rights. Objective of Bikalpa was to dig out the reality with them verifying its outcomes and come up with recommendations to capture their needs and aspirations. And the community wouldn’t have to wait until the completion of the study - they could already start what they thought were appropriate to carry out. These activities would also form the part of the recommendations that form a part of this document.

PopEd run by the facilitators contributed to the research. The communities participated in the action research through the same process. Issues would emerge in the discussions and the conclusion of the discussions would be taken into action. Frequency of similar issues emerging from discussions would indicate a common issue for Chure. This led the facilitator to deepen understanding of the issue and bring out to rally for support. At the same time, it engaged the community in action-reflection process and motivated them to get organized for



actions. People initiated self-help activities or demanded services with the providers.

Bikalpa sought to change the tradition of implementing activities by someone designed by somebody else without internalizing the purpose of it. Facilitators were a part of forming concepts of the program. Dialogue with the community, writing case studies, orientations on social justice and discriminations gave a good opportunity to delve into the reality of their own community. This made the facilitators well versed with human rights approach to development (RAD). Answers by the facilitators given to a question what bothers you the most, structural causes of obstacles to changes were clearly indicated.

### 2.3.1.2. Use of Inclusive and Empowering Methods

Software aspect in most development work still remains under emphasized. Even when there are activities for enhancing capability to manage development initiatives, it is confined to trainings and workshops to a handful people in the project. In contrary, Bikalpa created opportunities where more and more people could participate. First, it



worked through the local facilitators by selecting them from the communities and training them rather than looking for trained personnel. Twenty-five of such facilitators conducted regular interactions in with some 3,000 people in Sarlahi and Mahottari districts alone. Mass meetings, bicycle and on-foot rallies in the communities in remote village

included thousands of people. Most trainings were conducted in the villages itself that provided opportunity for a good number of people to take part without entailing much cost.

Reaching to the mass with a message is not as easy as it may appear. People just do not turn up. Mobilization of leaders or facilitators is vital but people do not gather unless they are credible. Once, they have been able to convey the message and they know what it is for, then do they take part. Bikalpa organized more than 10 large gatherings on the issue of land rights of the people in Chure area. Once the villagers were convinced, they joined the gatherings even without knowing how exactly it is like in many cases. This took many especially women out of the house and gave a sense of liberation. Chanting slogans or singing songs with message was a powerful mobilization process. It gave the deprived the visibility and power from the sense of solidarity while it took the oppressors aback. Power centres were compelled to pay heed on the issues raised. Issues raised in large masses also got legitimacy.

### 2.3.1.3. Applied Training

Training to leaders or the facilitators of a change process given by captivating them in a hall for few days is not enough. They may know from a good training what is said but they cannot understand exactly what is implied without them having opportunity to practice it. Bikalpa provided



opportunity to work on the same subjects that was discussed in the training. In a series of modular trainings, participants were asked to write what they already know about the subject that was to be discussed in the training. The participants were given assignments after each module so that they are engaged on the issue and can relate it with the reality of life. At the end of each module, participants came up with their action plan until the next meeting/training. They were coached to establish the relationship on how the content of the training were/are relevant to

what they have been doing. Following is the kind of a set of tasks given before and after the training on community forests for example:

- Please go through the constitution and work plan of a Community Forest Users' Group (CFUG) of which you are a member (if not read someone else's).
- How was your community forest handed over - ask the users and write the process
- What activities have taken place after the hand over and to what extent such activities have benefited the poor?
- What activities can be done in the community forests - ask 5 persons and write it down.
- Identify the most disadvantaged households in the community and interview them what they think about it?
- What NTFPs are found in your community forests - have any of them been sold commercially? Discuss with the community.
- How the income from the community forest is being distributed? Ask the committee.
- What was the impact of the hand over of the forests to women? What kind of activities benefit them - discuss with women's groups.
- Who make the decision in the CFUG? Are there women, dalits and janjatis in the committee? Has the committee made decisions in their favor?
- How do the activities undertaken by the CFUG stand from the point of view of social justice - hold discussion in the community.

Society where someone is living looks normal to most people: 'this is how things are' although he or she may have lots of dissatisfaction. To take action against one's dissatisfaction one should have a critical outlook of the society he or she is living. Without knowing how the community is structured and how it functions, one cannot think about changing it. In order to do so, a social worker should be able to describe it both in macro and micro terms. Bikalpa initiated its work from societal analysis making use of available tools and techniques to impart that skill to the facilitators. The facilitators had to apply the tools and analyze their own community.

#### 2.3.1.4. Fun and Dynamism

Bikalpa adopted dynamic and entertaining style of work that kept both



people in general and the facilitators kept recharging. People get easily exhausted with serious work all the time when they have to face humiliation and resistance in the process of change. It applied methods such as walkathons from one village to the other, bicycle rallies, and cultural programs separately or in mass meetings, festivals, graffiti. It gave different experience and sense of synergy of unity. It also helped to have high turn over in the events. It was a part of popular pedagogy. It helped widen the thoughts of people, build the confidence and internalize the issues for action.

#### 2.3.1.5. Macro and Micro Linkages

Cause of pain is not always at the place where the pain is felt. One has to apply medicine where the wound is, at the same time, need to have anti-biotic so that the cause of the wound is also checked. Problems of Chure do not originate from chure alone. Sometimes, there is a policy in place but it is not implemented or at times, implementation is determined by a policy. So advocacy at different levels is necessary. In order to bring changes in Chure, it organized people at village clusters to VDCs to districts to national level so that actions are taken at all levels



for advocacy. A strong apex body inspired the smaller units while active smaller units empowered the apex body. Representatives from 25 Chure districts out of 36 got together and have formed the National Chure Conservation and Rights Forum (NCCRF). Details of the organizations have already been discussed under achievements in the preceding chapter.

### 2.3.2. The Process of Building Dynamic Facilitators

Change is a process of fusion of new and old ideas. Everything old is not gold nor is everything new nice. Intense interaction is necessary for the right kind of fusion of new and old ideas. In order to ensure local leadership to bring in the local perspective but open to new ideas, the local youth were selected and trained as mentioned earlier a number of times. Following sections give a detail account of this process.

#### 2.3.2.1. Selection Process

Selection process is the most vital part of building facilitators. Training alone doesn't ensure quality. Selection process itself should give a preview

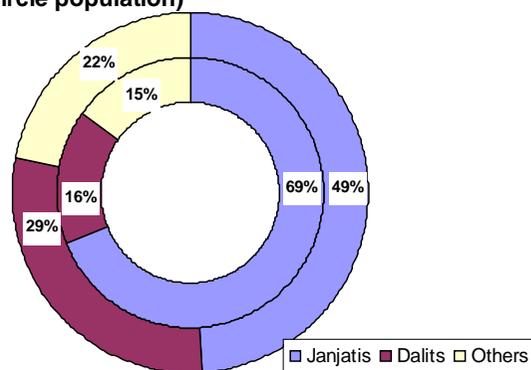
of the kind of work one can expect. It is important that expectation of both the employers and the facilitators is met. Following table gives an account of selection process and the criteria of the facilitators.

The Criteria (not prioritized)	The Process (in order)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must belong to the oppressed groups of the locality</li> <li>• Must be from the household who does not have food round the year from family land</li> <li>• Preference to women, dalits, janjatis</li> <li>• Must have 'fire in the belly' for change - negates the status quo</li> <li>• Demonstrated involvement for change and district</li> <li>• Good performer in existing local groups</li> <li>• It is compulsory to stay significantly in the village itself</li> <li>• Formal education is not a bar but should be able to have a</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion in the village about program objectives.</li> <li>• Clarify tasks and perks of the facilitator</li> <li>• Generation of the criteria of the facilitators from the discussion</li> <li>• Blend the criteria (left) with the criteria from the discussion</li> <li>• Give the gathering the responsibility of identifying a facilitator fitting in the criteria</li> <li>• District coordinator to facilitate if there is deadlock to help resolve disputes that may arise</li> <li>• Ask the group to justify the candidate when</li> </ul>
<p>In Sarlahi and Mahottari districts 25 and 23 facilitators were selected respectively with the local NGO partners. When it was expanded to change and district, on the second year, selection was made directly by Bikalpa with the communities. An important consideration was that it represents the ethnic diversity and gender composition of the population of the area. Table 15 gives the District coordinator to facilitate if there is deadlock to help resolve disputes that may arise</p>	<p>Charboiled Chure</p>

**Table 10: Facilitators by Districts, Ethnicity and Gender**

District	Dalit	Janajati	Other	Female	Male	Total	%
Saptari	3	1	0	1	3	4	10
Siraha	1	2	0	1	2	3	7
Dhanusa	0	2	0	1	1	2	5
Mahottari	2	5	3	5	5	10	24
Sarlahi	2	6	5	7	6	13	32
Rautahat	0	1	0	1	0	1	2
Bara	0	2	1	2	1	3	7
Makawanpur	1	1	3	2	3	5	12
Total	9	20	12	20	21	41	100
%	22	49	29	49	51	-	-

**Proportion of Facilitators to Population  
(inner circle population)**



### 2.3.2.2. Ways of Equipping the Facilitators

Significant attention was given in development of human resource at local level. Following were the main type of input provided to the facilitators:

#### a. Training and Orientation

A number of trainings were conducted for enhancing their knowledge, attitude and skills. Following general orientation on the

scope of the work, training started with social analysis, followed by development concepts, and natural resources management. Other thematic trainings included societal analysis, *popular education*, facilitation skills, building and mobilizing an organization, advocacy, land rights, Legal provisions on natural resources, PRA, community forestry, nursery management. Normally residentail, trainings conducted by the specialists on the subject, were directly releted to the work the facilitators had to perform in the village.

#### b. Action-Reflection: Forcing thinking

There were reflections everymonth amongst the facilitators: what was achieved, what made it possible and what to take home? Such meetings that run 1 to 2 days at a time, held at district level, between the two districts or all Chure districts. Opportunity was also created for study visits to another village, district or part of the country where they had to come up with a report: what lessons they learnt worth copying or adapting.

Important point to note there is that Bikalp emphasized on reviews and reflection as a central part of the job not just something a ritual people have to do. It's the reflection that steer the future activities and actions a group or an individual would take on.

Lots of reading material, audio-visuals were also supplied that they had to review. Most important of them all as mentioned earlier was to write case studies every month: what they thought important worth writing in the community in the period of time they knew of.

#### c. Hands-on Support

Expreincd persons from the partner organizations apprenticed the facilitators in the community. They worked together with the facilitators conducting discussion to identify an issue and in mobilizing and organizing the community at individual basis. From time to time they also made 'trouble shooting' visits to the area.

### 2.3.2.3. Role of the Facilitators

Role of facilitators was dynamic one and it was not always possible to put all of them in the job description.

**a. Community Analyst**

Analyzing the community they live in from social justice perspective was an important role they had to play from the very beginning. They could interpret the situation they are in and the underlying reasons behind. They identified the relationship amongst the groups and form and nature of exploitation. They could isolate the discrimination based on gender, caste, ethnicity and the class including

**Functions and Tasks of a Facilitator**

1. Conduct a weekly discussion in the community
2. Make notes of the discussions
3. Write minimum of two cases every month
4. Enumerate the survey questionnaire
5. Conduct VDC-wide meetings
6. Help community to organize and mobilize for action
7. Liaise and coordinate with the institutions working in the community
8. Intervene when relevant in the meetings held in the area
9. Help the deprived section of the community to get access in the activities conducted in the community
10. Help link (go together) with the institutions to realize the action plans drawn in the weekly discussions where external support is essential
11. Make his or her quarterly plan, present in the meetings and execute it
12. Study regularly on the matters pertaining to the issues
13. Write and submit monthly report

the collective political-economic perspective. They understood how discrimination is responsible for limiting opportunities to the oppressed and cream the benefits. They had to collect cases to illustrate their analysis that can demonstrate their depth of understanding.

**Researcher**

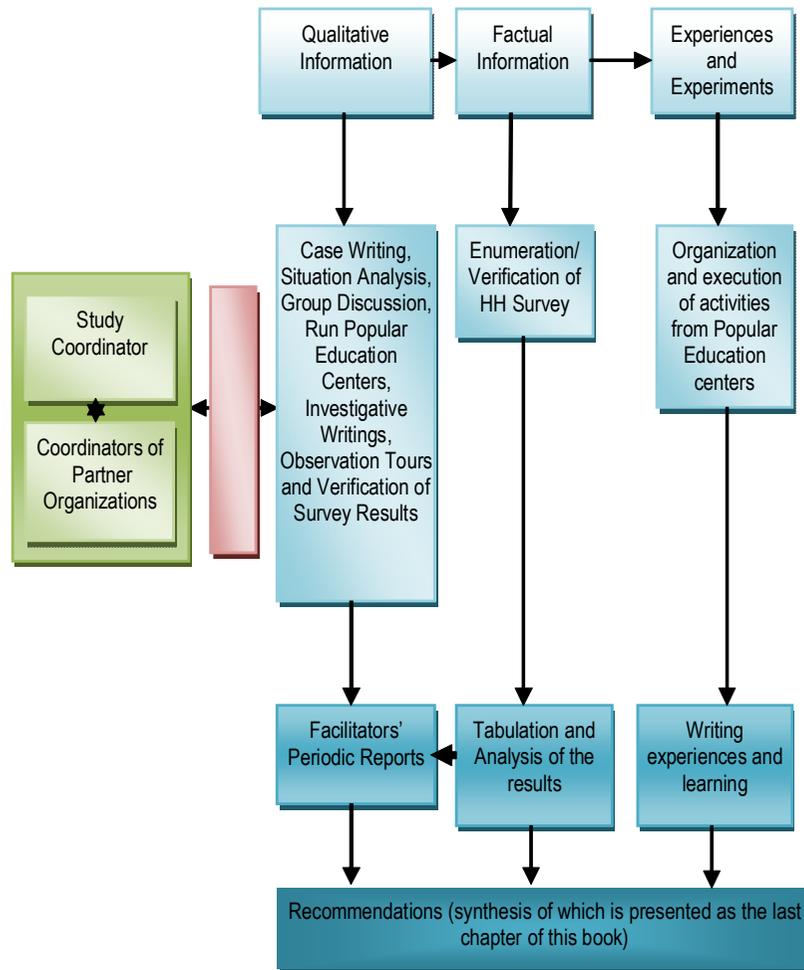
Since Bikalpa was an action-research it was imperative that the facilitators were to involve in the research. They had to interview people on the household survey; they were not mere enumerators but could influence the content of it: what its necessary to know. They also learnt how to tabulate the information, process it to certain extent and interpret results. They also verified the outcomes with the community leading into possible action plans. It gave the richness of their interactive work in the community to ensure accuracy of response. They also used this as an opportunity to hold dialogue at the household level and pick up an issue from the community. Combination of qualitative and quantitative research gave them a wider insight to the process and methodology of research. Since they were involved in the process there was ownership to the outcomes and were motivated to understand the society represented in statistical terms to certain extent. It was one of the best examples where popular education was used for a true meaning in the sense of a facilitator being an agent for change.

**b. Planner**

When they are involved in a social dialogue, facilitate discussions in the community and pick up the issues, logical way forward would be to take them into executable actions. They were trained in making micro plans and they had to help the group to make action plans. Plans were divided into two kinds: those needing external support and those not needing external support. Even when no external support was necessary, they provided the needed leadership. Examples that did not need external support where action plans were drawn were: controlling smuggling of timber, regulating grazing, abolishing untouchability and reducing discrimination. There is a need for leadership for these kinds of actions but conventional leadership was feudal and vested in their own interest. These facilitators filled this gap. One day, they will take the role of formal leaders in the community. When they needed external support, they

were already working as a campaigner for demanding due services to different service providers.

**Diagram II: Schematic Sketch of the Action-Research Modality**



In the past, when local feudal ‘development was demanded and brought’ by the leaders by befriending the staff of the concerned service providers and peoples role at best was to donate lobar. They also boasted themselves for ‘taking trouble for people’ and

people had to be indebted for no justifiable reason. These facilitators changed this scenario by visiting the service providers with people first to enquire what is available and then exploring the scope of making proposals. They translated executable issues to proposals. It helped bridge gap between people’s needs without skills for making proposals and the excuses of the service providers that there is no demand for their services.

**c. Activist**

They already venture into the arena of organization and campaigning when they had to execute plans and demand for external resources. They had to organize people when they were dealing issues such as land rights, conservation of resources, and lack of access to services. They facilitated the formation of organization, conducted mass meetings. They were aware of rights in general and lack of poor peoples’ access to resources. They stood by the poor and advocated in their interest.

**d. Custodian of Local Resources**

It’s not that activists were oblivious to environmental issues when they were overburdened with social activism. They have well understood the ecological precariousness of Chure and have taken initiatives in this regard such as controlling wood smuggling, watched overexploitation of river beds, regulated free-roam cattle. They have also led the community to get the community forests handed over and to soil conservation office for saplings. They have seen the relationship between livelihood and the conservation of Chure. They are convinced of local control of local resources.

**2.3.3. Tools and Techniques Used**

One of the foundations of success of Bikalpa is its facilitators and the mobilization of the community by them. For documentation and learning methods used to equip the facilitators have been presented below:

**2.3.3.1. Household Survey**

Household Survey technique in is nothing new in itself. What is interesting here is that the facilitators were involved in the proess from designing

questionnaire to enumeration to tabulation and analysis. Quality of survey in one hand got enhanced and the outcome of the survey was presented back to the people on the other. Facilitators got one more tool to the quantitative approach to social analysis. The outcome of the survey was illustrated with a living example that gave life to the data, This activity, however should be noted that it was not one of the first activities to be carried out.

### 2.3.3.2. Societal Analysis

This is more qualitative analysis of the society: facilitators could start seeing the society more than from the surface. Thrust of this exercise was to dissect the society from political-economic perspective that the world looks different depending where one is standing. Change means difference to different section of the society. The village is not uniform as is seen from the surface.

### 2.3.3.3. Writing Case Studies

Writing case studies is the flagship of the tools and techniques used to equip the facilitators. Writing case studies is a gauge to understand how other input has been understood and utilized in the context by the facilitators. Each of the facilitators had to come up with two case studies that struck them in the villages when they gathered for monthly meetings.

### 2.3.3.4. Encampment

A kind of open ended but issue-focused mobile workshops were held in different parts of the area called *shibirs* or encampments. Villagers together with the facilitators got together with food to cook. The landless in the host village arranged for cooking and living. They held discussions and drew plan of action and the campaign coordinators helped to deepen the issue and design the procedure of the gathering. Each of them are encouraged to express their pain; feel that

#### Elements of Societal Analysis

- Geography
- Resources
- History
- Ethno-social Diversity
- Livelihood
- Problems and Issues
- Opportunities
- Development Scenario

he or she is not alone to go through the pain leading to realize that there has to be a way out for the suffering. This while worked as an instruction camp helped to developed solidarity amongst the landless. In many occasions, a task undertaken would be to analyze the village they come from. It often included cultural programs interwoven with the issue. It at times also invited the local leaders to speak as what they thought about the issue and what their position would be so that they know who to seek help and who to counter to.

### 2.3.3.5. Cultural Campaigns

Song and Music was used quite a lot in the program. Initially, Diayalo Cultural Group from Banke was invited to apprentice the facilitators on how to use music for change and awareness. Since then it has been an inevitable part of any programs may it be a meeting or a mass rally. It is very important to energize the community and the facilitators as understanding one's position in the society, accepting it and getting ready for change takes a lot of energy. This also entertains and energizes them.

### 2.3.3.6. Bicycle Rally and Pedal Walks

Bicycle rallies were organized to spread the word in different villages as well as learning from different communities. It gave a sense of adventure and solidarity sets a winning mood both of the visitors and the hosts. Important point to note while appreciating its affectiveness is that it needs a lot of preparation including bicycle repairs person and a kit. A number of *pedal walks* (foot march) in a group of around 20 people was also used where cycling was not possible.



### 2.3.3.7. Discussion Circles

It's a centre of popular education that facilitators had to run a minimum of once a week. People come and discuss about their lives – why are they are whatever, wherever they are and what they can do to hange it. Main tool is 'but why and How then?' questions often posed by the facilitator. It generates themes and organizes people to put into action. These were the foundations for the organization. These discussion has resulted in a number of actions that people could do themselves.

### 2.3.3.8. Graffiti

Facilitators also used Graffiti that is often found in urban areas in the villages with messages and demands. It was an effective way for people to start asking questions in the village. Since it was visible, it triggered lots of discussion here and there.



# 3.

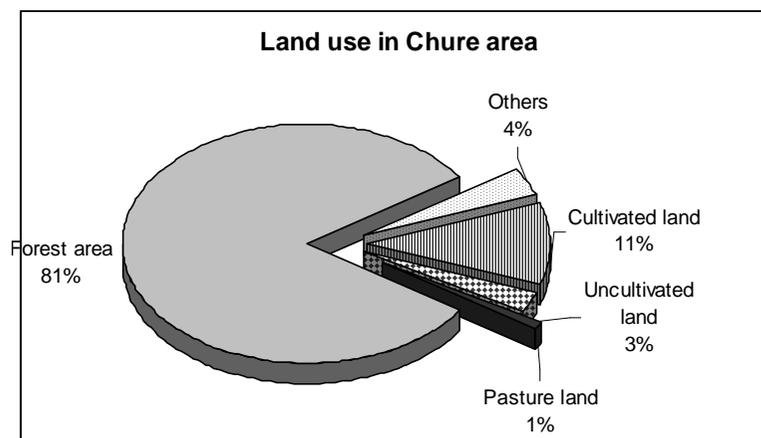
## ***Charbroiled Chure: Issues***

3.1. CONCERNING LAND USE .....	45
3.2. CONCERNING LAND OWNERSHIP .....	45
3.2.1. Status of Land Entitlement .....	45
3.2.2. Entitlement and Conservation .....	47
3.2.3. Land size and Conservation .....	48
3.2.4. Landlessness and Conservation .....	49
3.2.5. Tenency and Conservation .....	50
3.3. CONCERNING NATURAL RESOURCES .....	50
3.3.1. Poverty and Firewood Selling .....	51
3.3.2. Unmet Ever Increasing Demand .....	51
3.3.3. Community Forests: Light and Darkness Within .....	52
3.3.4. Rivers and River Beds .....	52

3.4. CONCERNING LIVELIHOOD .....	53
3.4.1. Food Insecurity .....	53
3.4.2. Labour Exploitation .....	54
3.4.3. Indebtness .....	54
3.5. CONCERNING POLITICAL ECONOMY .....	55
3.5.1. No Remote nor Accessible .....	55
3.5.2. A Land of Minority .....	55
3.5.3. Mismatching Development Efforts .....	56
3.5.4. Generation without Education .....	57
3.5.5. Plunder of Chure and Its People .....	57

### 3.1. CONCERNING LAND USE

In the districts where Bikalpa operated, Chure area covers some 60 (Makwanpur) to 7 (Rauthahat) percent of total land. However, arable land in these districts is 17 and 5 percent respectively. Saptari has just 3 percent of arable land. This means that people have to continuously expand their farm land to accommodate new arrivals. Conversion of forest to agricultural land continues. According to a survey, forest area between Bagmati (Sarlahi) and Kachana (Butwal), shrunk from 74 to 65% between 1958 and 1992. Land under agriculture however, increased from 7.5 to 22 percent meaning that much of pasture land is also converted for cultivation (Bhaju, 2000) .



Its indeed ironic that landlords grow *sissoo* (*Dalbergia sissoo* – a fine hardwood) without success in the land where rice could grow while poor clear fell trees in marginal areas to grow food crops. APPSP expects farmers to stop cultivating in marginalized land as the productivity of land increases whereas 20% of country’s arable land is left fallow.

### 3.2. CONCERNING LAND OWNERSHIP

#### 3.2.1. Status of Land Entitlement

In Nepal, 5% rich people occupy 37% cultivable land whereas 47% poor have a mere 15% (HDR, 2004). Irony is that who has more land

also possess the most productive land. The state cannot provide or assist in earning livelihood to those who have the least land. There is little off-farm employment opportunity. So, combined with hunger-resistance strategy, people continue to encroach forests as already said above. Other than some bureaucrats or some local feudals troubling people in attempt to try to make some money or enjoy power in some areas, the state cannot effectively check this encroachment. In a way people living in remote areas were/are free to convert as much forest land as they can as long as they do not come into conflict amongst themselves. Chure is the best example of this situation. It is fairly safe to say that if the better land is made available to the tillers, not only the issues of livelihood of those cultivating in marginal areas is addressed also the nature gets relief.

### Amount of Unentitled Land

In Bikalpa area of Chure, 82% of the cultivated land is not entitled. This is as high as 97% in Makwanpur to 63% in Dhanusha districts. In legal terms, all the unentitled land is forest area! Following table (Table 11) gives the details of unentitled land in Chure:

**Table 11: Status of Land Entitlement by District**

Districts	Total Land Bigha	Un-entitled Land Bigha	% of Un-entitled Land	Entitled Land Bigha	% of Entitled Land
Makwanpur	400	35.5	97	4.55	3
Bara	210.55	200.5	95	10	5
Rautahat	108	95	88	13	5
Dhanusa	123.2	77.5	63	45.7	37
Siraha	554	477.5	86	76.5	28
Sarlahi	172.05	124.4	72	47.65	28
Total	1302.45	1061.85	82	235.6	18

*There is a Mushahar tole 2 kms south of Bardibas Bazar cosisting 24 households with a total of 162 individuals. Have early breakfast and head to the forest with an axe, doko and namlo, collect a load of firewood, take it to sell in the Bazaar in the afternoon, buy supplies - rice, salt, oil and vegetables (and some alcohol if you are a male) with the money is their daily chore.*

*Both the Community Forest Users' Committee and the Range Post harrass them. Once the Range Post Guards caught them red handed and took them in custody. They said "either you give us another work or let us continue selling firewood". Their family joined them empty stomach. The staff had no any other resort - fed them for a night and let them go with the load of firewood. They were happier being fed!*

*Mushhars are known for their hard work to convert forest land into agricultural land. They have converted hectares of land for others. In some occasions - as is*

*the case here - are taken to a new place for that job. They were given a piece of land to for constructing house but never a settlement to their land when their own land was entitled.*

Amongst the surveyed households 84% on average have no entitlement - districtwise. In Sarlahi, there are 76% households who do the share cropping in unentitled land. Makwanpur has the highest number of share croppers in an unentitled land. Although even the poorest have some land, the process of displacement by the Sonar Bikalpa reported 2063 in the rise. Land ownership on average in Chure is found to be low (9 kattha (0.75 acres)/HH).

Out of the above, although Janjatis occupy 83 percentage of such land, there is not much discrepancy with other groups.

### 3.2.2. Entitlement and Conservation

No ownership no belonging! Classical knoweldge tells you. Land is no

exception. When you cannot sell or rather don't know when you have to leave, one is not interested for a long-term investment on land. When you don't invest your energy on maintenance productivity is bound to be low.

There is a techno-political-economic hitch: government agencies think that if they support conservation activities in Chure, it may imply that they are encouraging encroachers. No people of power live in Chure anyway. People are careful to keep their land clean of trees – another classical knowledge in Nepal tells them that if one keeps tree in their land, it will not be entitled as it will be considered uncultivated. Price of unentitled land is also low. In some places in Chure, you get a bigha of land for as less as 5 thousand rupees (\$70).

Lack of conservational maintenance causes depletion of soil leading to low production leading to lack of care – taking low productivity and conservation in a vicious circle.

### 3.2.3. Land size and Conservation

In the survey carried out in 2006 in the 6 districts, few had sufficient food round the year from their land. In the survey carried out in 2005, a mere 18% had enough food from their land. 9 Kattha of land/HH is too little to survive a family.

Looking from social group wise 13% landless were Dalits. Districtwise, Makawanpur and Siraha have 3% while Dahanusha has 22% although average landlessness is found 8% in Chure. However, amongst those who have some land, 15% households possess a mere 2 katha while 40% have less than 5 katha. A mere 7% have more than 1 bigha of land - a minimum requirement for survival for a small family.

When so many people live on with so little land two points are clear: a) many work as agro-labourers or share-croppers as already mentioned, and/or b) heavily depend on forest when there is little employment opportunity. It is well established that

*Pastor Lama has 10 family members including himself. He bought 5 bighas (8.3 acres) of land for 50 thousand rupees in Rai Gaon, Ram Chuwa in Makwanpur! A bigh of reasonable land in that district easily should cost 50 thousand if not more.*

share croppers do not take care of land as often conditions are not favourable to tillers. Its no wonder that landslide taking its toll: 9 and 17% land in Chure and Bhawar in Sarlahi for example was washed away in the past few years. They cannot claim any compensation or relief for being illegitimate settlers. What they end up doing is clearing and cultivating further marginalized forest. In the survey conducted in 2005, a reason for migration of 25% of people was the loss of land for land slides.

**Table 12: Size of Landholding by Districts (Is it registered or not?)**

District	Total HH	Total Arable Land	Ave Land Size	Range of Landholding Size					No of Landless	% of Landless in District	
				Less than 1	1 to 2	2 to 5	5 to 10	10 to 20			More than 20
Makawanpur	336	2800.0	8	0.0	8.9	28	39	19	3	3	17
Bara	713	4211.0	6	3.1	19.6	35	21	13	1	8	22
Rautahat	308	2035.5	7	0.6	9.7	46	21	16	2	6	26
Dhanusa	270	2464.0	9	0.0	7.4	15	26	22	9	22	34
Mahottari	704	11097.6	16	0.0	2.6	15	27	34	18	3	29
Sarlahi	497	3440.65	8	14.1	20.9	16	16	13	6	15	34
Total	2828	26048.8	9	3	12	25	24	19	7	8	27

Source: Bikalpa Survey, 2006

### 3.2.4. Landlessness and Conservation

Above facts are sufficient enough to illustrate that landlessness causes depletion of natural resources. There is a casual relationship between poverty, landlessness and the degradation of natural resources. Even if poor people have more land in the beginning, they can not keep it with them. Land remains the only asset to spend for them, at the time of difficulty. Or as often happens, many people are not aware of legal instruments and even do not have legal world view, they are taken over by the clever section of the society. Still mostly indigenous people live on 'moral economy'.

When they lose out land for one or another reason, only option left for them is to a) to acquire more marginal land by clear felling; and b) selling wood (and timber to lesser extent) from the forests as some kind of

market exists throughout east-west high way that runs along Chure.

### 3.2.5. Tenancy and Conservation

Still feudal system prevails in many places in Chure. A few people possess plenty of land that they handed on to agricultural land by hiring people to clear fall in early years, buying heavily when poor needed money or by trapping them in loans or by using legal instruments in immoral ways although even they do not have land ownership in some places. Obviously, they cannot cultivate the land themselves. They give it for sharecropping often in unfair proportions, or in contrast. In some places, such land lords live down in Bhabar or even in the plains and go up to hilly areas to collect their share or fee for tenancy. For tillers' rights (in the past but the law is abolished now), they do not say for how many years their tenancy lasts.

Apparently, tillers do the minimum to cultivate the land. They do not do any maintenance activities or invest their energy in long term improvements. Consequently, land degrades year by year. Since the production from the land is not adequate, they give priority to immediate and alternative means of income such as rushing stones or selling firewood to the market.

## 3.3. CONCERNING NATURAL RESOURCES

Nepal's agriculture is dependent on forests. Forest provides fodder and leaf-litter for animals which contribute in manuring farm, provide poles for climbing crops such as beans, fencing material and agricultural appliances such as plough and hoe-handles. Let us keep reduction of run-off factor alone. Farmers where forest is appropriately located are better-off than those who are not well positioned or forest does not exist altogether i.e. farmers do not have to spend much energy and time to gather supporting material for agriculture. It is estimated that two hectares of forest is required to support a hectare of agricultural land. So it is pertinent that forest is managed well to maintain agricultural system. Chure that encompasses some 13% the land area contributes 23% forest cover of the country.

The following points give an outline of the problems faced by Chure forests.

### 3.3.1. Poverty and Firewood Selling

Conservationists do get worried when they see rows of standing bundles of firewood to sell along Chure in the east-west highway. Since this is relatively cheaper than in large towns, vehicles do buy a few bundles and take to farther places. It is not difficult to imagine the destruction of Chure forest deep in the interiors. However, this firewood is the life line of poor people. Those who are better-off trade on timber where poor people with strong muscles and some skills saw timber for wages. Children and women supply firewood. One thing, they do not have to worry is the demand for their firewood. Part of the demand for firewood of Terai is also met by Chure.

Other than in places where there is a strong CFUG, Chure dwellers have almost no restrictions to collect firewood to sell. Some collect firewood and take to the roadhead or to bazaar the next day to sell while some who live close by the forests, go to collect another load of firewood for the next day after they sell a load. Others take firewood to the wholesaler not too far from their settlements although they subject to sell for less than when selling directly to the customers. Those who have a bicycle can take firewood twice more than those who take on their backs. So one can imagine, how much somebody with more means can take firewood to the forest. From time to time, people from the south take a tractor to buy firewood directly from the choppers. Of course, other than those who make money by employing poor people are keen on this profession.

### 3.3.2. Unmet Ever Increasing Demand

All the need for forest resources by the people living in and around Chure including much of Terai has to be met by Chure forests. The trend of using law to take action when not in personal gain and allowing misdeeds for personal gains is also found in the forest administration sector. In fact, this is the kind of attitude of the authorities that led the haphazard encroachment of forests in Chure at the first place. Until today, smuggling of timber from Chure encouraged in the older days, continues.

Concerned authorities have not been able to establish a mechanism to meet an ever increasing demand for forest products. Its worth investigating how many of those who sought permission for cutting

timber for construction of their house have actually done so. A handful 'well connected' people gaining from this high demand for forest products. They encourage poor people to chop trees. The poor are easily lured by a relatively high wages for this job. Nor the district-based Forest Products Supply Committee is effective for supplying wood nor DFO is found to have taken any meaningful action together with people to control smuggling despite the fact that they are well aware of such facts.

### 3.3.3. Community Forests: Light and Darkness Within

Although there is no clear policy on how to manage Chure forests, some tracts of forests have been handed over to the community by the government lately. Community managed pieces of forests are indeed better managed than by the government. However, there is anomaly in the implementation of the kind of democratic practice the community forest system has envisaged. There was an imprint of our social structure in the community forestry too: the elites, the so called high caste males dominate the group and decisions have been hijacked in their favour. They are often subject to the influence of commercial interests as the wood is becoming more and more expensive commodity. A perspective such details can be found in (Bhattarai and Dahal, 2005).

Still the best option to manage forests in Chure is to hand it over to the community.

The picture is not all gloomy either. FECOFUN and others concerned have been working for good governance of FUGs. More and more FUGs are increasingly making decisions in favour of social justice. Important is that CFs should be handed over with a lot of pre and post formation support to FUGs.

### 3.3.4. Rivers and River Beds

River beds are like smoke to charbroiled Chure: they indicate what happens up inside Chure. River beds are expanding every year. Soil and gravel multiply the volume of flow downstream resulting in cutting and flooding of precious farm land. Old folks say that rivers have widened so much one can't see the other side with their eyes while you could skip across a few years ago. Let alone the change of courses by rivers and rivulets covering hectares of land under gravel and sand on

their sides. Rivers in the winter are just rivers of sand and stone.

When their farms and houses are under the rubbles of the rivers, people climb further up as they cannot afford to move down causing more of the same problem later. In the floods of 1994, 9 households from the plains of Sarlahi (Dhurkauli VDC) were reported to have moved to Narayankhola VDC of Sarlahi. People from two sides of the river play duel: one side creates a dyke to protect their land directing river to the other side – the other side gets flooded; next year the other sides do the same directing the river to the opposite. It also gives people opportunity to encroach on the river. Of course, sides of rivers also host a number of cattle increasing hoof-scratching of the soil. In 2005, an FUG invested 7 hundred thousand rupees for river training in Rajabas village of Gauribas VDC. River is already filling upto embankment brim. However, people see only what they see – few think on the causes of this kind of devastation upstream.

In other ways, rivers of Chure are serving the construction industry by bringing the gravel, stone and sand from remote hills of Chure to more accessible Bhabar or Terai. DFO, DDC and VDC all claim their rights over such resources. These are primarily contracted out for collection by the DDCs for millions of rupees every year. All seem to profit from it formally and informally. But no one appears to pay attention on the care it requires for proper extraction or on how to benefit the people from where the resources are extracted. Provision for DDC to recycle the revenue from such sources to the concerned VDCs is not found to have implemented.

## 3.4. CONCERNING LIVELIHOOD

### 3.4.1. Food Insecurity

Food availability directly correlates to the ownership and size of the land a household possesses. This has been discussed at greater length earlier. In the Bikalpa survey in 6 districts, none had sufficient food round the year. Districtwise, Dahanusha and Saptari districts were the worst where two percent of people had enough food for seven to nine months from their land. Ethnic group wise, 31% of dalits have not enough food even for a month. Most of the food shortage is met from forest resources or from loan.

### 3.4.2. Labour Exploitation

It is clear, there is not enough work in the land. Nor there is opportunity for off-farm employment. Market outside is not less competitive for unskilled people. Some people may get some employment in smaller towns along the high way but neither they can cover the cost of living there nor they can work and come back everyday. So they migrate mostly in off agricultural season for selling labour. They are mostly engaged in informal sector where they are paid less than said apart from long hours of work and extreme working conditions. Many go to India to work as agricultural labourers. People including children go to Kathmandu Valley to work in brick kilns, carpet factories, and in general construction works. They also work as loaders, porters, and labourers for road construction. Bottom line for them is that at the worst case, if they manage to survive somehow the food they would have to eat at home is saved!

### 3.4.3. Indebtness

It is also getting clearer what people do when there is not enough food from land and there are no other means for generating income. 73% of the people of Chure in Sarlahi and Mahottari districts are indebted. Interest at 60% from local moneylender is common in the area. 24% is the lowest in the range. Interest in grain was in vogue until recently and still found in some places where one paid one *mun* (40 kg=upto 200 rupees in the case of paddy) of grain for 100 rupees. People took loan for their treatment, for purchasing livestock or for mourning or wedding. Loan is also taken for celebrating festivities such as *dashain* or *sankranti*. Loan is the last resort for food, oil and salt as well as for other essential house supplies. Lately the most popular reasons to borrow money is to go abroad for earning. An average wage earner's more than a half the income made in 3 years in a Gulf country is said to cost for paying the capital and the interest.

What was also revealed in the discussions that loans taken from the government owned banks are not paid up. Interest due to bank has already surpassed the value of collateral land. Some collateral land is in the process of being auctioned by the bank. Luckily, banks do not accept unentitled land as collateral so not many people are facing such a harsh action. None of the Rs 20 million loan floated by Womens Development Section in Chure and Bhabar of Sarlahi is said to have

paid back.

However, loan from local moneylenders must be paid back. They are forced to sell the valuables including land or ornaments. It was found that some smuggle timber, go abroad for more loan or some even keep children as domestic workers in the household of money lenders to pay back the loan.

## 3.5. CONCERNING POLITICAL ECONOMY

### 3.5.1. No Remote nor Accessible

Chure area is considered accessible; certainly not categorised as remote. They are more isolated than many remote districts of the hills. Because the land next to Chure in the southern side is flat, there is theoretical vehicular access up to the foothills. Otherwise it takes hours to get to Chure destinations from the foothills. Internal remoteness is not any lesser: trails from one to another settlement are rough and steep, land is uneven and unpleasant to walk, they are dry except in monsoon when it is difficult to cross streams. It makes this area less attractive to service providers. Because they are not categorised as remote, they do not receive additional allowances.

Until there is a pressure, programs do not get to less accessible places. This creates an opportunity of development brokers: a handful people who have access to such agencies establish relationship with the concerned and cream the program in the name of the people. An average Chure resident cannot make to district headquarters to enquire about the program. A government staff who went to Chure area of Sarlahi flatly said the place was not appropriate for establishing a goat farm as it was difficult to get to for monitoring. And there is little social appreciation for having worked in such difficult areas as one would get for having worked in remote hill districts. Even high mountain districts are physically remote but not as isolated as most parts of Chure. But you get some social recognition.

### 3.5.2. A Land of Minority

Only a small part of Chure falls in a particular district details of which are already discussed in the beginning of the document. Combined

with small geographical area and relatively low density, population of Chure is small in the district. Thus, population of Chure cannot influence the affairs taking place in the district. It is obviously dominated by people living in the plains or bhabar. Someone said “ Its just right place for underground politics – its easy to hide and not too far from motorable roadhead”. Political parties including Maoists in recent years have used it just for that. No leadership from Chure has emerged yet except some dubious recent agitations in the name of Chure Unity Society.

People of Chure area cannot attract development investment. Agencies in the district cannot internalize the issues faced by the people of Chure even if any attention is drawn. Its always less efficient to invest in Chure rather than in the dense south.

### 3.5.3. Mismatching Development Efforts

It has not been discussed whats the appropriate form of development in Chure. Few efforts are seen to improve the livelihood conditions of the people. The perennial priority of development i.e. the road construction in Nepal appears not feasible without proper investment. They are subject of ‘undoing’ by the rain if not well bound with gutters and black topping. A number of failed efforts of road construction including Rautahat to Makwanpur’s Rai Gaon road under FfW. Many CFUGs now have joined hands to align a road to connect parts of Chure in Sarlahi and Sindhuli.



It is extremely difficult to cater services such as drinking water or electricity, even school and health centres in the scattered settlements. In Chure that is covered by forests, its management for the benefit of its residents hasn’t got a priority. Priorities are governed by the plains irrespective of its needs.

### 3.5.4. Generation without Education

Present statuts of education ensures the development of the future. Bhabarian say that ‘Chure people are tempted to send children to weave carpet rather than sending them to schools’. Albeit the extent of its truth of this statement is not known, even the children themselves do get tempted to earn when contemporaries go for earning. Situation of schools in Chure is not good. First, they are too far for young children – there are streams in between in the monsoon. Further, ‘teachers do not attend schools’ – Chure redients point ‘if they do, they are drunk and do not teach children well’. Most of the teachers do not stay in the villages since they come from outside. They arrive late and leave the school as early as possible. Chure people, however, cannot tell this to the teachers who are more powerful in manyways: class wise, genderwise, social group wise and of course, assertion wise. As the local schools deteriorate, residents of Chure cannot afford to send their children to private schools as in many other places. What Chure appears to do is to continue producing another generation of unskilled workers creating a vicious circle.

### 3.5.5. Plunder of Chure and Its People

As is already evident, people in low land dominate people of Chure. It is more so when they are living in fresh untentitled land. In some places even graze their animals in cultivated fields.

Its relatively easier in Chure to chop down trees. Timber for construction in Bhabar is taken from Chure. The same is done for poles for climbers, plough and handles for agro appliances. Animals are grazed all over Chure. Fodder and leaf-litter is also collected from Chure. People keep whole of their animal herds in Chure . Share keeping of animals is also practiced: you give a poor a goat and you share the offsprings half and half when they are grown. The Bikalpa survey found that a fifth of animals are kept on a sharing basis and the parent owners are from outside or absentee landlords. When oxen or cow are exhausted of

other uses, they are sent up to be ‘re-charged’. So much so that even the colored soil for scrubbing is collected from Chure. A tractor of colored soil costs NRs 500. In fact, most of the furniture needed for Bhabar is worked out in Chure and exported. Clever people make a wooden house for some time and dismantle it completely to bring it down as the wood is laundered. Poor do this for the rich people of Bhabar. They often are the moneylenders too. When they are in need of wood, they are said to give loan to clear fell the land to poor residents.



# 4.

## *Recommendations*

4. Recommendations .....	59
4.1. ESTABLISHMENT OF A CHURE AUTHORITY .....	62
4.1.1. Major Tasks of the Chure Authority .....	62
4.1.1.1. Entitlement of the Land to Tillers .....	62
4.1.1.2. Land use Planning .....	63
4.1.1.3. Management of Specific Areas .....	64
4.1.1.3.1. Sensitive Zone .....	64
4.1.1.3.2. Land Not Suitable for Growing Grain .....	65
4.1.1.3.3. Land Suitable for Agriculture and Settlement .....	66
4.1.1.3.4. Forest .....	66
4.1.1.3.5. Riparian Land .....	66

4.1.1.3.6	Conducting Research Information and Resource Centre .....	67
4.1.1.3.7.	Coordinating Government Line Agencies .....	67
4.2.	PEOPLES' ORGANIZATIONS .....	68
4.3.	ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES .....	68
4.3.1.	Cost of Environmental Services .....	68
4.3.2.	Organization and Commercialization of Riparian Resources .....	68
4.3.3.	Employment Opportunities and Soft Loan .....	69
4.3.4.	Tourism .....	69

**Overexploited**, resources surpass the level of resilience. Once, trees have clear-felled from these dry slopes, replanting or regenerating is not easy if not impossible. It is not easy to evacuate people once settled. Unless depleting situation of Chure is checked in time, everybody will have to pay its price. Livelihood of people depended on natural resources will be threatened. However, if opportunities of employment are created for people, their dependency on natural resources will be reduced. Today's investment on children's education means a contribution to Chure conservation in the future.

Both nature and humans prosper if due attention is given to conserve resources. If ownership of resources is handed over to the people, their participation in conservation increases. If this is augmented with skills and knowledge, dependents can make use of these resources without depleting them. This however, shouldn't mean that residents of Chure alone are responsible for rapidly dwindling resources. Those who are not depended for livelihood are also behind depletion of resources. No their livelihood is threatened by putting a stop to their exploitative activities. It is imperative that addressing greed is the priority over need.

Without creating opportunity for employment and increasing production from the land conservation of Chure is not possible. There are not good enough alternatives other than making use of the land to meet basic necessities of the people. In order to increase production from the land it is proven that land be entitled to the tillers. There is a whole downward spiral of not entitling the land: they do not take care of it with long term perspective in mind that in turn results in decreased production, causing less and less care leading to fallow. This means that people are compelled to clear fell what is available encroaching more and more to marginal lands. This in nutshell is the foundation of its recommendations. Of course, entitlement alone is not sufficient but this is where other intervention can begin.

Recommendations made here are the outcomes of the action research that is dealt in the second chapter in detail. These recommendations have two conceptual frameworks for implementation: a) that approach to addressing the issues of conservation - a watershed should be a unit of work - not the political unit where even the two neighbors are in different wards, VDCs or districts and b) rights-based approach be adopted in addressing the issues of livelihood. Latter means that supply-

driven approach where the problems are realized by outsiders doesn't work. It should work to empower people who can claim basic necessities as rights to a dignified life and fair share of resources available.

## 4.1. ESTABLISHMENT OF A CHURE AUTHORITY

Although Chure encompasses some 13% the total land of the country, it has not been able to draw the proportional attention it deserves. Because, it is scattered in so many districts and people living there have low voice and are always in minority, the belt risks the negligence and overexploitation of resources. It needs an identity and advocacy to speak for Chure if the process of degradation is to be reversed. Formation of a powerful Chure Authority (CA) to manage the area is recommended. This will prevent being Chure area left as insensitive antenna of a terai district or as a pig's tail of hills district. More discussion and exercises are necessary for making it to be a functional body and demarcate it. It may well fit into forthcoming federal restructuring of the state. It must be stressed that interventions in terai should not be a sporadic series of patchwork but a comprehensive mechanism to address the issues of Chure holistically. Major tasks of the authority are conceptualized below. In the mean time, people need to get organized and press for such an authority.

### 4.1.1. Major Tasks of the Chure Authority

#### 4.1.1.1. Entitlement of the Land to Tillers

Analysis of land distribution and the discussions with the people what can be concluded is that entitlement of the land to the people will have positive impact on nature and livelihood. Apparently, the nature and livelihood are interdependent. It should be recalled that 84% of the land is not entitled. The first and the foremost task of the Chure Authority should be to entitle land to the tillers. The followings are recommended for this process:

- An inclusive committee comprised of proportional of population: women, dalits, janjatis and the landless in each VDCs needs to be formed. A point to be noted that provisions need be created in such a way an absentee land-holder is not entitled of his or her land.

- Record of land utilization by the households needs to be maintained at VDC level where people have their say on classification, demarcation and ownership including the criteria for eligibility for entitlement.
- A landuse map to be prepared in each VDCs and if the land falls in an ecologically sensitive area the family should be compensated the land elsewhere.
- The maximum ceiling of the land should be fixed at 5-7 kattha (.4-.6 acre) per person not exceeding 5-7 bigha (8-10 acres) per household depending the land quality and the minimum not less than 1 to 0.5 bigha (0.8 to 1.6 acres) for a household based on land productivity and the proximity to the road.
- No land should be entitled if any members of the same household own 1 or more bigha of the land elsewhere.
- The land should be jointly entitled to the two most senior men and women of the household.
- No entitlement of the land should be given to those who are not tilling the land for themselves.

#### 4.1.1.2. Land use Planning

Clause 51 of the Land Reform Act, 1964 created a provision for land use planning according to the nature of the land under the terms and conditions laid out by national council. This provision was never realized. Badal Commission had also recommended for land classification and the land utilization planning. Soil and Water Conservation Act 1982 has also made provisions for the classification of watershed and the activities those can and cannot be carried out in certain categories. However, no land use policy is found implemented anywhere in Nepal. It is highly relevant in Chure.

In implementing such a plan farmers should be supported to deal with the kind of land they are allocated. If its a land happened to be allocated for agricultural production, the farmers should be augmented with technology, seeds and access to market. Orders alone won't work. The same to be done if its allocated for horticulture or diary production. Land entitlement and appropriate technology are the two basic preconditions for an appropriate use of land. They need to know what to plant but they had to be sure that the land belongs to them.

Although Chure has its own character, but its not uniform in micro-climatic conditions, soil type, vegetation and so on. People are compelled to use it haphazardly without paying due attention to this sensitivity. People have already been settling in and cultivating steep slopes and slide prone areas. Classification of land in Chure and implement land use accordingly is clearly an improvement to both the liverlihood and the nature.

It is better to involve local people in mapping process although there is a good stock of modern mapping techniques available. Participation of people in the mapping process increases acceptability and makes the plan executable. Its a huge task to map some 13% of country's land and can be expensive too. So, localization of mapping and classification is necessary – at VDC or micro watershed level. However, this planning has to be put together at different levels – districts or watersheds including whole Chure. Classification should include a minimum of the following category:

- Sensitive Zone
- Forest
- Arable land: crops, horticulture, pasture
- Riperian area

This can be further classified into specific fruits and vegetable, NTFP zones depending on the proximity of road and settlements.

#### 4.1.1.3. Management of Specific Areas

Planning of the classified zones also needs to be made in consultation with people at local level putting together at higher levels to support in legal, economic and technical terms. Any unit of a VDC scale should be the local coordinator of the plan. Important is to create an environment of trust so that people are assured of entitlement and check the further influx of new commers.

##### 4.1.1.3.1. Sensitive Zone

Area prone to slides and mass movements and the areas that are detrimental to other settlements needs to deleanated in consultation with people so that they can be managed by them. Plans to relocate settlements or fields need to be made at VDC or micro watershed level and collated with larger area plans. Below are some of the aspects that needs to be considered for the management of sensitive areas:

##### a. Relocation plan

In order to reduce the loss to humans, human property and the nature, it may be necessary to relocate settlements and fields. They should be relocated to next closest possible areas that enhance the livelihood opportunities of the people but not reduce. Points to ponder for relation are put in the box on the right. Areas for relocation can be: secure fallow land, land illegally encroached beyond the ceiling (5-7 kattha (4-6 acres) /person maximum 5-7 Bigha (8-12 acres)/family depending on land quality), clear felled less sensitive forest areas. Mostly, relaocation plans are administered from the top and subject to embazzlement and are often inappropriate to local realities. Thus such a relation must be under taken at local level.

##### b. Relocation: Points to Pay Attention

- Fragmentation of a community
- Difficulty to adjust to new condition
- Potential conflict between the old and new commers
- Availability of pasture and forest products
- Cost for basic amenities
- Management of Relocated Area

Utmost care needs to be taken – there is a high potential that relocoated areas are settled by new commers. Such areas need to be handed over to the people as said earlier and managed through the mehanisms suh as community forests. It should be recalled that Chure area west of Bagmati was evacuated in 1987 but was fully settled in 20 years. There was no planning to manage the evacuated area.

##### 4.1.1.3.2. Land Not Suitable for Growing Grain

Many of the cultivated areas of Chure are not suitable for cultivation of grain crops. It desirable that agriulture shifts its thrust from grain-based to tree-based cultivation. However, there are two bottlenecks – **one and the foremost is that farmers will not be willing to plant fruit trees<sup>2</sup> without land entitlement**, and the second is that significant

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2 Because in the past, government would not register any land where trees were growing. This was one the reasons why there was a massive destruction of forests in Nepal.

follow up and support is required for people to phase out from one to phase in to another system. For the first reason, entitlement of the land is so much stressed. Once this has been done this alternative has the following alternatives keeping in view with the proximity of market in the terai:

- a. Horticulture
- b. NTFPs
- c. Fodder Plantation (for Stall-fed Animal Husbandry)

#### **4.1.1.3.3. Land Suitable for Agriculture and Settlement**

It is imperative that once land suitable for agriculture and settlement is considered appropriate, land should be entitled to the tillers. Then support for conservation farming is necessary. Entitlement ensures that people pay attention to the improvement of the land in the long-term. With the combination of fodder plantation and animal husbandry, the whole agricultural pattern will stabilize and enhance production. Good experience and literature is available in this direction in Nepal.

#### **4.1.1.3.4. Forest**

It is loud and clear that government offices cannot protect forests. Handing over the forests to the adjoining community is the most obvious answer. There is a rich and lengthy experience in Nepal on how to go about it (one example is Bhattarai and Dahal, 2005). Of course, a lot of managerial and technical support and educational action is required in order to bring the desirable outcome from the community forests – make it inclusive and equitable. This should be taken as a cushion to absorb the pressure of demand for local needs for products. Given the kind of social structure (inhabited by marginalized janjatis and dalits who are already deprived in their area of origin, with little understanding of the geo-politics of the area), issue of equity is more challenging than in the hills for example. Some of the alternative activities recommended for the land not suitable for grain cultivation can also be practiced in such areas.

#### **4.1.1.3.5. Riparian Land**

Stone, sand and gravel that is found along and in the river beds of Chure is key raw material for voracious modern construction industry. Millions of rupees are already received by the local governments in terms of revenue. However, unchecked and unmanaged exploitation

of such material will lower the river bed and speed up the land slide upstream without giving due benefit to the locals who are living next to it, and do get affected by the negative impact of exploitation. It has also to be considered that availability of such material has happened at the cost of inappropriate use of land upstream. In some places, river bed has gone up and covered valuable rice fields. The following specific recommendations are made regarding the management of riparian resources of Chure:

- a. Organizing people who are/will be directly affected by the river and its health and give the responsibility of control and management of resources to them under an agreed framework with the concerned authorities.
- b. Once, the above mechanism is in place, either the locals collect the revenue of using resources or the revenue collected by the authorities (currently by the concerned DDCs) has to be rephoned to the community living along the sides of the river (such as in the buffer zones of protected areas).
- c. Draw an integrated riparian management plans with the people and support its implementation.

#### **4.1.1.3.6 Conducting Research Information and Resource Centre**

Chure has remained a neglected area reasons of which have amply discussed. There is a need for different kind of researches conducted specific to Chure. The most needed research is that of agroiculture. There is no any kind of research station by NARC in Chure area. Lobbying for or conducting a research on its own is yet another task of Chure Authority. There is a good opportunity to conduct action research with NGOs such as this one in Chure.

Data on Chure needs to be separately aggregated. Results of such research can be fed and a Chure Information and Resource Centre needs to be established with branches in few places of the country (at least three from the east to west).

#### **4.1.1.3.7. Coordinating Government Line Agencies**

More brains are necessary what should the scope and jurisdiction of Chure Authority should be. This has to be brought into discussion in the current debate on state federality and devolution. This should be an

area of interest to integrate and take the issue forward for those who have interests in Chure.

## 4.2. PEOPLES' ORGANIZATIONS

Devastation of Chure can be attributed to some extent to the deprivation of the rights and services of the people living there. The state neither could cater the services nor could prevent the exploitation of the people living here. It should be recalled that most of the people who come to live here are already worse off in their origin economically, socially. Purperators have taken advantage of it.

In this backdrop a vibrant organization of Chure people (even after the establishment of Chure Authority) is essential. Such an organization has to spend its energy in both expanding economic opportunities and claiming the due rights emphasizing the second one that includes their fair representation in CA. Organization is a key strength of people who are in minority, cultivate in infertile land and are subject to exploitation.

## 4.3. ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

The Following economic activities are recommended for Chure area:

### 4.3.1. Cost of Environmental Services

Chure functions as a slow percolating reservoir to the terai providing a constant supply of much needed water. If Chruuey is depleted and deforested, run-off will be faster and the terai will be deprived of water in the dry season. A mechanism needs to be devised in such a way that people living in Chure do conserve the resources and paid back for their resources. Cost of devastation in Chure will have detrimental affect in agriculutre and other livelihood conditions of the people. It is well established that a high raising river is not due to a high quantity of water but due to the soil and gravel it carries along.

### 4.3.2. Organization and Commercialization of Riperine Resources

Its scope and importance from natural resource point of view is already

stated above. It also needs to be viewed in economic terms. Apart from or in addition to the recyphoning of the revenue from the licences of collecting riperine resources, industries can be set up to benefit local people. Outsiders shouldn't be allowed to do the primary collection of resources and the processing industries must employ locals. Collection must be done in a ccooperative basis preventing over-exploitation. Locals should be given training and exposure to marketing in the construction industry including in India. Organization and commercialization of the resources should be managed the same way as the forest resources are managed in the community forests by users' groups.

### 4.3.3. Employment Opportunities and Soft Loan

Employment opportunities should be sought in horticulture and vegetable production, animal husbandry and horticulture and the processing of NTFPs. They should be provided with training soft loan both for production and meeting the shortage for consumption. Consumption should also include loan for higher education. Education is the most potential investment in the future of Chure people. This is one of the second shortest route after land entitlement to take Chure people out of poverty - forever.

### 4.3.4. Tourism

Tourism in Chure in abundantly scenic country of Nepal may sound a bit weird. But its not. Its proximity to hot terai can give an escape to cool heights in the summer while it can serve a refuge from the cold blanket of terai in the winter. After all, its not ugly – it can give a two-way view: mountains in the north and the plain in the south. It can also tempt to detour drivers to spend a cool night on a long haul. Farm houses and family homes can attract rich plains' people to spend a weekend over! And this market is not confined to Nepal's boarders – it can be what Massoorie to Delhi and Deharadoon to the people of Bihar and UP states of India.



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